



NEWS RELEASE

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VETERANS' ENTREPRENEURIAL TASK FORCE PRESENTS SBA WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED SERVICES TO VETERANS

WASHINGTON --Aida Alvarez, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), today met with members of the Veterans' Affairs Task Force For Entrepreneurship to receive the group's recommendations for improving the agency's program and service delivery to the veteran-owned small business community.

"The SBA has made a strategic commitment to ensure that the doors of economic opportunity and business ownership are open to those who have done so much to make this country strong," Administrator Alvarez said. **"Veterans who wish to start or expand their businesses have the full support of SBA. These recommendations will serve as a catalyst for SBA's new veterans' initiative."**

The task force, which Administrator Alvarez established last July, examined all aspects of the agency's programs, including business development, education and training, financial assistance, government contracting and advocacy, and made recommendations on how these programs can better serve veteran-owned small businesses. Top recommendations from the group include developing a comprehensive outreach program to assist disabled veterans, providing targeted business development training and assistance to veteran-owned businesses, and creating greater access to capital and credit.

Administrator Alvarez said the SBA will develop a concrete plan of action and make an announcement of the agency's new veterans' initiatives by early next year.

As an additional step in the SBA's efforts to assist veterans, Administrator Alvarez also announced the appointment of two veterans' advocates to the agency's top advisory boards – the National Advisory Council (NAC) and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Program's national advisory board. The new appointments are Richard F. Weidman of Chevy Chase, Md. and William D. Elmore, owner of Data Services in Eureka, Mo.

Mr. Weidman brings 20 years of experience as a successful veterans program administrator, advocate and advisor to the National Advisory Council. His accomplishments include the establishment of the Veterans' Bill of Rights for Employment Services in New York, as well as a case management system, which has been emulated in more than 25 other states. Mr. Weidman managed the second largest employment services program for veterans in the nation. His career has also included work to obtain better quality health care, employment, small business development assistance, housing and other services for veterans.

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The SBA's National Advisory Council is made up of approximately 130 volunteers who serve as the eyes, ears and voice of the SBA. In addition to monitoring how SBA's policies and programs are impacting small business, NAC also helps to inform the public about SBA programs and services.

Mr. Elmore will serve on the SBDC national advisory board for a term of three years, providing advice and counsel on the administration and improvement of SBDC programs nationwide.

Mr. Elmore brings experience as both a successful entrepreneur and recognized national veterans' advocate to the board. He was honored as the SBA's Veteran Small Business Advocate of the Year for Missouri in 1984 and is the recipient of the Presidential Certificate for Outstanding Community Achievement of Vietnam Era Veterans. As an experienced businessman, Mr. Elmore developed the national model for the SBA's Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program.

Established in 1982, the SBDC national advisory board's mission is to advise the SBA on ways to advance and improve the national and local SBDC programs and operations.

The Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE), the SBA resource partner that provides counseling services to small business owners, also plans nominate a veteran to serve as an advisor to the SCORE board of directors.

The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners. The SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.

America's 23 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

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